



# VIP2VIP

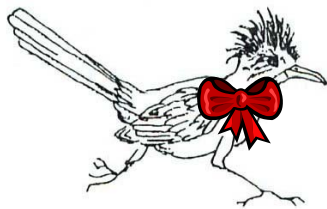


Season 3, Volume 2

Big Bend National Park's Volunteer Newsletter

December 3, 2003

## Special "Couple" Edition!



Lynn,  
Judy,  
Marsha,  
Pete,  
Steve &  
Nettie  
visit  
before  
the  
feast.



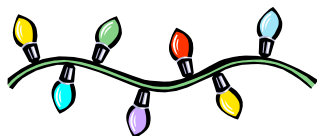
The November 10th VIP Potluck dinner was a great kickoff for the upcoming busy season. Volunteers & park staff had the opportunity to become acquainted.



Katrina & Alicia, along with Matt, provided the scrumptious dessert called "SCA Dirt".



Each person thought of an animal beginning with the same letter as their first name. We then introduced ourselves as our animal with the corresponding actions. We continued around the circle and it became quite humorous as each person repeated all the names and actions.



SCA's Katrina, Alicia, and Matt are working hard at RGV for Resource Management. They are continuing the necessary dirty work to improve the Mosquito Fish or *Gambusia Gagei's* wetland habitat.



### Persimmon Gap

Mark Kirtley- Visitor Center

Nettie & Gifford Babcock- Visitor Center

### Castolon

Charles Gorecki- Interpretation

Steve Harper & Judy Brinkerhoff- Camp Host & Backcountry

Whitney Hibbard & Samantha Schroeder- Camp Host & Backcountry

### Rio Grande Village

Marsha & John Coates- Visitor Center

Barbara & Bill Baldwin- Camp Host

Royann & Royce Brockett- Camp Host

June & Tony Jacobson- Backcountry

### Chisos Basin

Ginny & Jim Herrick- Visitor Center

Lee & Joe Pytel- Camp Host

Carol & Bob Schemm- Camp Host

### SCA's

Katrina Jensen- PJ Interpretation

Matthew Sandate- PJ Interpretation

Alicia Riley- PJ Interpretation

### Panther Junction

Becky Reiger- Volunteer Coordinator's Assistant

Steven Wick- Resource Management

Bob & Scarlett Wirt- Resource Management

Melissa Powell- Resource Management



## Couple # 1

### Pete and Marsha Coates

Pete (John) and Marsha grew up together in West Monroe, Louisiana. Their mothers were best friends, and consequently, as children, they played together constantly. Pete says when he first met Marsha she was in diapers. Their young romance continued all through high school. Pete joined the Navy after graduation, which left Marsha to finish her last 2 years of high school without him. They were married in October 1969, after Pete's return from Vietnam.



The newlyweds set up housekeeping in West Monroe, where Pete started working for a paper mill company. In April of 1972, their first daughter was born. Both Pete and Marsha wanted more from life than the future they envisioned in West Monroe. When the Navy offered Pete the opportunity to return, they realized the career change would give them opportunity for travel and new experiences. Pete re-enlisted in the Navy and resumed his job as an Aviation Fire Control Technician. He worked with weapons guidance, radar, and navigation.



After a short time in Albany, Georgia, they were stationed in Key West, Florida, where they remained for 5 years. Their second daughter was born in Key West in 1976. Marsha enjoyed raising their two beautiful daughters while Pete continued with his Navy career. During this time, they purchased their 1st tent at a yard sale and the family started camping. They remember being jealous of friends with an Apache pop-up trailer, because they both knew that one of these days they would take off on a long trip themselves. The family camped in their tent until they bought their first motorhome in 1989.

After 22 years in the Navy, Pete retired and went to work for the Department of Defense in Jacksonville, Florida. Their daughters were older and Marsha felt she could consider a permanent job. She started as an executive secretary, moved to a position as a legal secretary, and finally became a paralegal. Even though they were both earning good incomes and living an envied lifestyle, Pete was not surprised when Marsha said they needed to make a change in their lives. He describes her as a person that always has to see what's around the next bend. When he asked her what change they needed, she showed him an ad in a magazine asking for volunteers in Alaska!

Marsha sent some resumes and Pete requested leave from the DOD. Just as they were becoming discouraged and afraid they didn't have the qualifications necessary to volunteer, they were offered a job working in a visitor center at Denali State Park. That same afternoon, they received a call from the buyers of their house wanting to move up the date for closing. In early 1999, Pete and Marsha were ready to take the trip of a lifetime! They enjoyed the beautiful setting in Denali so much that they returned to volunteer in 2000, and 2002. They both agree they will go back sometime in the future.

In 2001, they volunteered at The Cradle of Forestry in America, a national historic site in North Carolina commemorating the birth of forestry conservation. Big Bend has been on their list of places to see for a long time. Their daughter and son-in-law visited this park and immediately called them, knowing they would love it. In the few weeks that they have been here, Pete and Marsha have learned as much as they can about this park and the area. Their enthusiasm welcomes visitors in the Rio Grande Village Visitor Center.

After they leave Big Bend, they will travel back to Louisiana, to Marsha's mother's home, for a reunion with their children & 2 granddaughters. From there, they plan to travel to Fort Davis, Texas, where they will do costumed interpretation. Marsha's desire to make a change in their lives has come true in more ways than either of them could have imagined. Her need to see around every bend has given Big Bend, and these other parks, a valuable asset in these two volunteers.







## Couple # 2

### Joe and Lee Pytel

The new Basin Campground Hosts, Joe & Lee Pytel, are hard-working and hard-playing individuals. Their love of the outdoors and our national parks make them a great asset to Big Bend.

Joe Pytel grew up in Central Falls, Rhode Island. He spent 3 years studying pharmacy at the University of Rhode Island, but decided to join the Army before completing his degree. Joe went to Vietnam as an operating room technician in 1969.

Lee was born in Ebro, Minnesota, and went to high school in Bagley, MN. She attended nursing school in Duluth, and worked for 2 years in a hospital operating room. She wanted to go to Vietnam, so she contacted all the armed forces. She joined the Army because they could guarantee her a tour of duty in Vietnam.

Lee was working at the 93<sup>rd</sup> Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh, Vietnam, when she met Joe. She noticed a deficiency in the way the staff welcomed new people and decided to greet the next new person. On April Fool's Day, 1969, Joe became the new person Lee greeted. A romance sparked which resulted in their marriage in August 1970.

When Joe returned from Vietnam, he re-enrolled in the University of Rhode Island, and earned a degree in nursing. After their wedding, they settled in Cumberland, RI, where they both worked in separate hospital operating rooms. Lee spent 30 years in the same hospital. After 20 years, Joe left the operating room and went to work in Lithotripsy. A Lithotripsy machine works to break up kidney stones. The expense of the machine prohibits individual hospitals from owning it. Therefore, the company Joe worked for brought the machine to the patients in an 18-wheeler truck.

In 1978, they adopted their daughter, Julie. She now has a degree in Marine Biology and is working in an environmental lab in Rhode Island. During the time Julie was growing up, Joe went into the Army Reserves. In 1998, he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Lee and Joe have packed in a lot of volunteering and traveling into the short amount of time they have been retired. When they retired August 2, 2001, they left their home of 31 years in Cumberland and traveled across the country 4 times! They visited 55 National Parks, including Big Bend, during that first year. Upon their return home, they sold their house and became fulltime RVer's. In October 2002, they started their first volunteer job at Big Cypress National Preserve in Florida. Part of the curriculum for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes in Collier County, FL, is to attend a ranger-led field trip in the swamp. The Pytel's job was to assist the Ranger, and they also led some of the trips. The children were taught how to test the soil, water, and humidity. The kids also enjoyed trying to track panthers, some of which had been brought in from Texas to help the gene pool.

From Florida they went to Yellowstone National Park to work as campground hosts. Lee and Joe don't feel they were able to do everything they wanted in one summer, so they plan to return in the summer of 2004.

Big Bend is fortunate to have these dedicated volunteers. They intend to make the transition to the reservation system in the Basin Campground as easy as possible. On their days off they can be found hiking and exploring every area of the park.





## Special "Couple" Edition

### Couple # 3

#### Giff and Nettie Babcock

In 1993, Nettie volunteered as a campground host in the Basin. She loved working in Big Bend so much, that she brought her groom of 8 years back here to volunteer. This season they are working at the visitor center at Persimmon Gap.

Since their marriage at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon on August 6, 1995, they have traveled and volunteered together. They did first person interpretation on a train ride from Williams to the Grand Canyon, while volunteering in the Kaibab National Forest. Giff became a 1920's forest ranger and Nettie described her life as his wife to the visitors. They also worked in interpretation at Rocky Mountain National Park, LBJ National Historical Park, and at the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center in Juneau, Alaska. Additionally, they spent one season as campground hosts at the Arkansas River Headwaters State Park in Salida, Colorado. Finally, for the past 4 years, Giff has volunteered for Habitat for Humanity in Kerrville, TX. He has served on the family selection committee and done several presentations of homes to the new owners.

Giff was not a novice at camping and volunteering when he met Nettie. He was introduced to camping while in Boy Scouts in Newark, NJ. Although he grew up in Newark, he is originally from Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, the mushroom capital of the world. He joined the Navy during his senior year in high school. While on a troop train going through Kansas, they hit a truck carrying wheat. Giff knew first aid and was able to assist the young man who had been driving the truck. They became friends, and that relationship was the impetus for Giff's attending Wichita University, where he earned a degree in Sociology and Psychology. While in Wichita, Giff married, had 2 children, and spent 37 years working with mainframe computers for various companies, including Boeing, Beech, and Cessna. He and his 1<sup>st</sup> wife spent time traveling, and at one time worked in a RV park in Maryland. They eventually moved to Bisbee, AZ, where he worked as the Director of Information Services at Cochise College. He was a widower when he met Nettie.

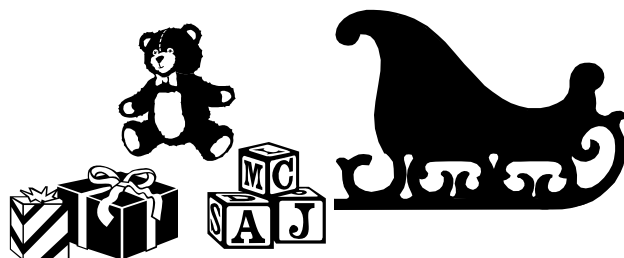


Nettie was born in East Benard, TX, 35 miles west of Houston. After graduation from Crescent School, 70 miles west of Houston, she went to work for Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. in El Campo, TX. She married and relocated several times before settling in Victoria, TX. Nettie and her husband spent a great deal of time traveling with their 9 children. They enjoyed camping in state parks, national parks, and national forests.

Their vision was to volunteer in those areas when he retired. Before they were able to achieve their goal, Nettie became a widow, and she began working as a decorating consultant. This business brought her to Lajitas, which introduced her to the Big Bend area. After working at the Basin as a campground host, she continued to dream of volunteering. She was working at a private campground in the Smoky Mountains when she first met Giff. After 4 months of corresponding, he flew into Nashville to visit her in the Smoky Mountains.

Giff's 2 children live outside of Lubbock, TX. He has 5 grandchildren. Nettie's 9 children live in various areas in eastern Texas and Alabama. She has 22 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. For the past 4 years Nettie & Giff have spent a great deal of time in Boerne, TX.

Big Bend visitors are welcomed to the park by Giff & Nettie's vivacity and experience. Their love of volunteering and their desire to contribute to the enjoyment of others while visiting, contribute to their success in interpretation.



## Activities & Events

**Holiday Auction**– Thurs, Dec. 4, 6:00pm, PJ Community Room.

**Joee May Barnes Memorial Scholarship Fund**

**Raiser BBQ**– Sat, Dec. 6, 12:00-4:30 pm, Terlingua Ghost Town.

**VIP Potluck Dinner**– Sun, Dec. 7, 6:00pm, PJ Community Room.

**Holiday Dinner**– Tues, Dec. 16, PJ Community Room.

**San Vicente School Program**– Thurs, Dec. 18, 6:00pm.  
*The Velveteen Rabbit.*

### Ongoing:

**Big Bend Community Choir**– Wednesdays,  
5:30 pm, Terlingua Elementary Band Room.  
For information call 477-2377 or 477-2442.

**Crafts** – Monday nights, 6:30-9:00 pm. PJ Community room.

Check the bulletin board at PJ for details and updates!



### HELP WANTED!

Volunteers are needed to help with various functions, including the Holiday Dinner. Check the bulletin board for a sign up sheet today!

### Volunteer Notes

- Once your paperwork for reimbursement has been submitted, please wait 2-3 days and then see Terry Boren, in person, in the Administration Office, Mon-Fri, 8-5, to sign for your check.